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IEPA confirms well water contamination

Posted By [Brandon Reid](#) On October 12, 2011 @ 7:02 am In [Amerock & Water Contamination Series](#), [Local News](#), [News](#), [Rockford News](#) | [No Comments](#)

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Results of the third round of groundwater tests conducted by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) in homes north of Auburn Street and west of the Amerock Corp. complex show contamination exceeds federal drinking water standards.

The results of those tests were sent by the IEPA to the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), then to the homes with private wells tested in July and August as well as two other wells in the area.

"They retested some of the original ones, plus two additional, and they're still seeing similar results as far as levels of contamination," said IEPA spokesman Maggie Carson in an exclusive interview. "That was our concern, and that was why we wanted to do another round. There were multiple wells that showed exceedence of the groundwater standard."

Carson said more than one or two rounds of tests or "snapshots" are needed "because sometimes these snapshots you need to know trends and if this is a fluctuating situation based on seasonal water levels — they have to look at these considerations. This is useful information for them.

"We have federal drinking water standards, and people are drinking that water, so we have those concerns," Carson said.

Carson said a member of the IEPA team assigned to investigate groundwater contamination and allegations of toxic waste dumping by Amerock Corp. is "working up a fact sheet" to give to public officials.

"She's building that list as we speak," Carson told *TRRT* Tuesday, Oct. 11.

When asked whether there would be a public meeting to disclose that information, Carson added: "That's not for me to say, but she (Carol Fuller, IEPA investigator) likes to do these. It's the most effective way to get the same message out to everyone."

Results of individual tests of private well owners are not public information, according to officials at the IDPH. *TRRT* will file a Freedom of Information Act request to secure the data, which will not contain individual addresses of homes tested.

The investigative team from the IEPA of Fuller and Mark Wagner toured the grounds on and around property formerly owned by Amerock recently, accompanied by representatives from the (IDPH), the Rockford Park District, *The Rock River Times* and former Amerock employees.

Although the details of what was discussed on the tour cannot be disclosed as part of an agreement between *TRRT* and the IEPA, the group accessed land around Amerock that includes the Mel Anderson Bike Path and land north of Kent Creek.

The testing of groundwater samples and the tour were part of a two-pronged investigation into allegations of toxic waste dumping by Amerock as well as the possibility of leaking underground gasoline storage tanks that lie north of Auburn Street and west of Central Avenue. IEPA officials also toured sites of potential underground storage tanks in the area.

Before taking the tour with the IEPA team around the bike path and on Amerock property, *TRRT* had agreed to disclose its sources to the IEPA after garnering permission from those sources to be part of the investigation.

"*The Rock River Times* will continue to cooperate with state officials while holding to the highest journalistic standards," *TRRT* Editor & Publisher Frank Schier said. "We want to help determine the source or sources of the groundwater pollution and land pollution. We will contribute to the investigation of Amerock as the alleged source of pouring toxic chemicals into Kent Creek and the land north of Kent Creek from 1956 until 1974 or beyond."

The Rock River Times began looking into allegations of contaminated water that were made by residents during two town hall meetings held at the Northwest Community Center in July and August. Allegations have been made that the land owned by the NWCC was formerly the site of a private dump in the 1950s and 1960s, and may have been used as a toxic waste disposal site of chemicals transported from Amerock. IEPA officials and Northwest Community Center officials have not formerly met to discuss touring grounds owned by the NWCC to look for toxic drums and other materials that have been alleged to have been dumped on the grounds.

"We haven't met with them yet," said NWCC Executive Director Jim Peterson. "We're going to wait until we meet with them before we do anything. We're trying to schedule a meeting with them. We'll see what that meeting brings, and then we'll move forward. Before we do anything, we want to meet with them and see what's up because we want to make sure we do the right thing. We will comply with whatever requests are reasonable, but we want to meet with them first before we comment on anything and before we do anything. We will wait until we hear from them, and we will see what accommodations can be made."

When the IEPA investigation will be completed is unknown at this time.

Meanwhile, *TRRT* has received numerous e-mails inquiring about where people who lived in the neighborhood west of Amerock and former employees from Amerock can go to report illnesses they believe are a result of toxic poisoning.

Former Amerock employees reporting a lack of workplace standards while working at the facility can call the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration main number at 1-800-321-OSHA. A complaint still can be filed online at the national OSHA website because Amerock is still in business nationally. The Aurora Area Office at (630) 896-8700 handles complaints against Rockford businesses currently in operation. Ask for the Compliance Department.

The OSHA office in Aurora reported no inspections of Amerock in the 1970s. No complaints were made against

Amerock or then-owner Stanley Works. Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, employers are responsible for providing safe and healthful workplaces for their employees. OSHA's role is to assure these conditions for America's working men and women by setting and enforcing standards, and providing training, education and assistance. For more information, visit <http://www.osha.gov> ^[1].

Those residents in the area who believe their health has been impacted by their private well water should contact the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) Rockford Regional Office, 4302 N. Main St., Rockford, or call the office at (815) 987-7511. Those with health concerns should ask to speak with Clay Simonson, environmental health supervisor for Rockford Regional Office of the IDPH.

For more about the allegations made against Amerock and about possible groundwater contamination, see the investigative reports as well as other stories provided online by clicking [here](#) ^[2].

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